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Zanzibar – A Magnet for Adventurers, Men-of God, Explorers and Conquerors

By Andrew Muigai

Those who have not been to Zanzibar will be surprised that despite its big name, it is only a small part of Tanzania. Zanzibar encompasses the main island of Ugunja and its twin Pemba and several small islets. A shallow channel 37km across at the nearest point separates it from the African mainland. As the crow flies, it is 73 km from Dar es Salaam and 219 km from Mombasa in Kenya.

Zanzibar is referred to as the Spice Islands with good reason. The fragrant scents of cloves, cardamom, nutmeg and vanilla hung in the warm tropical air. To this day sailors claim that they can recognise the aroma of the islands even when far out at sea. Surely, not even die-hard fans of the Spice Girls can claim anything similar. But the spice business is relatively recent, less than 200 years old. It is the fascinating history of the islands that evokes the image of magic and romance in the minds of visitors.

The charms of Zanzibar have at one time or another lured a vast array of adventurers, men-of God, explorers, traders and conquerors. The diligent time traveler will sight footprints of Bantu Africans, Phoenicians, Persians, Assyrians, Sumerians, Egyptians, Chinese, Indians, Malays, Portuguese, English, Dutch and Omani Arabs. That is why a visit to Zanzibar leaves a much more lasting impression than your usual island destination.

The first people to settle on the islands were Bantu Africans from the continental mainland. The assistance of the trade winds eventually brought in Shirazi Persians and Omani Arabs from about AD 700. Then commencing early sixteenth century, the Portuguese dominated the East African coast including Zanzibar for nearly 200 years. Sensing the decline of Portugal as a world power Omani Arabs invaded and subdued the Islands. The Omani Sultan was so excited about the prospects of riches from the Islands that he actually relocated here. The magnet was ivory and slaves.

The slave business was thoroughly unwholesome as you can well imagine. Zanzibar was the transit market of slaves coming over from raids in the interior. David Livingstone, the missionary and explorer had traveled extensively in the interior and was greatly offended by the practice and impact of the slave trade. This man-of-God managed to provoke liberal opinion in Britain, which led to action by the Royal Navy. For the sake of humanity, Zanzibar became a British Protectorate in 1890. And for the sake of

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smooth administration, power was finally transferred to the gentle hands of the King of England in 1913.

As a modern day explorer, Zanzibar welcomes you to peek at the rich heritage whose testimony is in the architecture and culture of its people. The cultural heart of Zanzibar is Stone Town, which is little touched by the hand of time. It is here that the association with "a thousand and one nights" comes alive. You will find narrow winding streets, bazaars, mosques, fortresses and a Persian style public bathhouse.

There are also palaces and grand houses whose magnificent proportions and extravagant decor does justice to the term "oriental splendour". Remember to pay homage to Dr. Livingstone by visiting the house named after him where he stayed for 3 months in 1866. The Cathedral Church of Christ, on the site of the open slave market, is of historical interest and for the devout is the appropriate place to pray for the souls of those who perished in the slave trade.

For an all-in view of Zanzibar, a "Spice Tour" is recommended. This will include ruins of palaces and ancient mosques', a Sultans harem, the Mangapwani slave caves and of course the spice plantations after which Zanzibar takes its trade name. Nature lovers may also want to take in Jozani Forest located 35 km from the city. This area of thick forest is one of the few remaining sanctuaries of the red colobus monkey.

Zanzibar is after all an island and the usual delights of a beach destination are available. Break your sight seeing by relaxing at the brilliant white beaches and soak in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. The islands have a good number of well-developed hotels and resorts. There are also plenty of opportunities for fishing and watersports. Pemba Island has its own unique attractions and snorkeling and scuba diving are particularly good here. The Pemba channel across from the main island is reputed to have some of the best game fishing anywhere in the world.

Mnemba Island, off the north coast of the main island is very exclusive. Condé Nast Traveller has picked it as one of the three most romantic ocean destinations in the world. That super model Naomi Campbell and her beautiful friends have been here is proof enough for me. I also think the earlier Sultan's would be much pleased to know that the Sultan of Software, Bill Gates has been on holiday in this very island.

To further enhance your experience in this part of the world consider making Zanzibar your base to partake of the other two of Tanzania's main attractions: a wildlife safari and mighty Kilimanjaro. You will be following in the footsteps of David Livingstone and the earlier explorers who used Zanzibar as their base for expeditions to the African mainland.

Zanzibar has two main festivals of interest to visitors: the Zanzibar Cultural Festival and The Zanzibar International Film Festival. The cultural festival is held in the July–August period and is marked with taarab traditional music and dance and display of arts and crafts. It also includes street carnivals, canoe races, bull fighting and fairs. Participants come from as far away as Germany and China though most are from Zanzibar itself and nearby countries.

The film festival celebrates the culture of the "Dhow Countries" and is staged in the first week of July. I can inform the curious that the countries enjoined here include those on the eastern seaboard of the African continent, India, Pakistan, the Gulf states, Iran and the Indian Ocean. Participants come from the world over. The heart of the event is the screening of competition and non-competition events. Other activities associated with the festival are dance and music performance, workshops and exhibitions on the culture of the Dhow countries.

Zanzibar is a hot and humid place, tempered only by sea breezes. The wettest period is April and May with a shorter and lighter wet season in November. The mean minimum and maximum temperatures are between 30 and 33 degrees centigrade. December to March is hot and dry while June to October is the period when it is coolest and driest.

Andrew Muigai is editor of AfricaPoint Insider online newsletter. It is part of AfricaPoint.com– the Africa travel website that has helped thousands of travelers discover Africa. You can view more info on Tanzania safari and tours at the website.

<http://www.africapoint.com/tours1/tanztour.htm>

Christ and Covenant

By Aleck Cartwright

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The Covenant and Christ

All are under sin, whether under the law or barbarians, and apart from the Law we are all in need of righteousness. Not one of us can stand before God righteous apart from Christ in us as our righteousness. God does have a covenant with Israel as His chosen race and we as believers are grafted onto the chosen race by grace. This is where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free for we are all in Christ, and there is a level playing field for all mankind who are made partakers of divine nature.

We as Gentiles never become Jews, except in the spiritual sense we become circumcised in our hearts having the law of God written on our hearts and in our minds. In Christ we realise the fulfillment of the law in our lives. We cannot attain to it and neither can the Jew, so whether we are under the law or not, we are all facing the wrath of God towards sin. Where God will judge us for what we have done according to Paul's gospel, which is Christ in us, the hope of Glory.

We as gentiles do by nature that which is required by the law because we have Christ the fulfillment of the Law at work within us. What a wonderful position to be in before God. Israel is still God's chosen people and as such they have the protection and covenant of God.

Sin is what all men have and righteousness is what all men need.

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Aleck is a missionary and author, to learn more go to www.god-life.com.



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